

6 “The lolicon guy”

Some observations on researching unpopular topics in Japan

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Introduction

Since the early 2000s, Japan has pursued a range of policy initiatives under the banner of “cool Japan.” These policy initiatives are based on the idea that certain forms of Japanese media and popular culture are perceived overseas to be cool, which represents not only the attractive possibility of expanding global markets, but also winning the hearts and minds of young people around the world and encouraging them to become “Japan fans” (Sugimoto 2013).¹ From the beginning, cool Japan policy has made much of the supposed popularity of manga and anime in “the West,” which seems somehow to legitimate the nation and demonstrate that proclamations of its decline are premature (Leheny 2006: 214–216, 220–223; Choo 2011: 85, 87–88). Although cool Japan policy has drawn more vocal critics in recent years (see Mihara 2014 for an overview), public funds are still being allocated to promote manga and anime, among other things perceived to contribute to a positive image of Japan (Nikkei 2015). Public diplomacy and nation branding are in no way unique to Japan, but its government has drawn attention for being openly invested in national(izing) popular culture.

Given this, it is significant that the global spread of manga and anime has generated not only stories about “cool Japan,” but also simultaneously rekindled familiar stories about “weird Japan” as a sexually deviant “other.” This distinct but connected national(izing) discourse of popular culture came to the fore in the summer of 2014, when Japan banned the possession of child pornography, but did not include in its definition of child pornography manga, anime and games sexualizing characters that appear to be underage or depicting them engaged in sex acts. The decision sparked widespread criticism outside Japan of its perceived failure to crack down on child pornography – criticism that conflated actual and virtual forms, ignoring the presence or absence of victim and crime (McLelland 2005: 63–64; McLelland 2011: 351–354, 360–361, 363). For example, one article condemning Japan as “the Empire of Child Pornography” (Adelstein and Kubo 2014) is illustrated with a photograph of a Japanese man looking to purchase media emblazoned with manga/anime-style girl characters, who appear to be young. In articles

such as this one, Japanese manga and anime and men attracted to them are positioned as sexually suspect. In the photograph described above, we do not know the content of the offending media or the thoughts of the man looking to purchase them, but assume from the framing that the media are child pornography and the man is a pedophile and potential predator. Japan seems to be full of such media and men, which begs the question: “Why is there such a fascination with sexual interaction with young girls – known as *rorikon* (Lolita complex) in Japan” (Adelstein and Kubo 2014)?

The alleged sexual fascination with young girls revealed in manga and anime and attributed to Japan as a nation is referred to as *rorikon*, or lolicon, as it is more widely transcribed.² Lolicon has long been a part of national (izing) discourses of Japanese media and popular culture, but manga and anime are particularly prone to be taken up as examples. It is not a problem to criticize manga and anime, which are not to everyone’s tastes and can repulse as powerfully as they attract, but it is a problem when critics move from personal repulsion to calls for regulation. It is a problem when critics equate attraction to manga and anime with perversion and pathology (Rogers 2010), and link the consumption of such media with horrific crimes against children – or, as one reporter ominously put it, “cartoons may be fueling the darkest desires of criminals” (Ripley et al. 2014). Although the jury is still out on the social impact of manga and anime – “It has not been scientifically validated that it even indirectly causes damage” (Adelstein and Kubo 2014) – many nevertheless feel justified to judge people guilty of imaginary crimes (McLelland 2012: 479). In this way, lolicon has become a keyword in global criticism of “Japan’s child porn problem” (Adelstein and Kubo 2014).³

Despite mounting concern about the sexualization of young girl characters in manga and anime, cool Japan policy continues to push for the creation of Japan fans, which is not unrelated to academic interest in Japanese media and popular culture. As Koichi Iwabuchi pointedly notes, uncritical research on and by fans of Japanese media and popular culture contributes to nationalistic discourse about Japan’s global influence (Iwabuchi 2010: 89). We can see this in remarks by Asō Tarō, a conservative politician and former prime minister of Japan who pontificated that, “Thanks to fans, Japanese culture, subculture, is undoubtedly being transmitted to the world [...] Isn’t this something that we should take more pride in” (Galbraith, forthcoming a)?⁴ When Asō said those words at a rally in Akihabara in 2007, he could not have known that years later journalists would use images of manga and anime displays in that very same neighborhood as proof that Japan was “the Empire of Child Pornography” (Adelstein and Kubo 2014; Ripley et al. 2014). If he had known, would Asō still have wanted to be associated publicly with Akihabara? Would he still have been proud of the “Japanese culture, subculture” being transmitted to the world? Or, like other members of his political party in recent years, would Asō instead have called for increased regulation of lolicon media? There are clear connections between global interest in manga and anime, government investment in cool Japan policy, and increased

scrutiny of manga, anime and fans in Japan (Cather 2012: 243–247; Galbraith, forthcoming a). If lolicon is Japan's "skeleton in the closet" (Alt 2014a), if the specter of weird Japan haunts cool Japan and threatens to possess it, then we can expect the government to bury the skeleton, exorcise the specter and attempt to shift the national(izing) discourse from critical to celebratory. In this way, the discussion of Japanese media and popular culture – by critics and fans, journalists and academics, bureaucrats and citizens – is always already political, and this is even more the case when the discussion is about lolicon.

This chapter provides some observations on researching unpopular topics in the politicized space of Japan. It is a polemic, which means a contentious argument against a position, in this case that certain forms of manga and anime are child pornography and that the presence of such media makes Japan the Empire of Child Pornography. The position against which I argue not only makes Japanese media and men sexually suspect, but also criminal. The position discourages debate, because no one wants to be seen as defending child pornography and abusers. Raising questions about categorizing manga and anime as child pornography is met with thinly veiled accusations of personal "interest" in the topic of lolicon.

In my ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in Akihabara, I have found the discussion of lolicon to be unavoidable. Although only a small part of my work, I have come to be labeled as "the lolicon guy," which is not without consequences. Most people choose to remain silent on the topic of lolicon to avoid the kind of guilt by association entailed in the label of lolicon guy, but it does not end there. In this chapter, I provide the example of a publisher cutting an interview and drawings related to lolicon from one of my books for fear of sparking "a moral firestorm" in the United States. The publisher's fear is understandable in context. Rather than risk the potential consequences, it is safer simply not to talk about lolicon. By remaining silent, however, we are complicit in the judgment of the unknown/other. The inability to look at images and listen to people involved has led to ignorance on the topic of lolicon and judgment of it based on ignorance. The chapter argues that it is politically necessary to include unpopular topics such as lolicon in the study of Japanese media and popular culture. If we are to intervene in national(izing) discourses that uncritically denounce or admire Japanese media and popular culture, we must engage with material that is unpopular and may make us so. Only in this way can we go beyond fixed and polarized positions to the more nuanced cultural politics of difficult topics such as lolicon.

The lolicon boom

Lolicon, now described as a "four-letter word" (Alt 2014a), has historically been a keyword for researchers of manga, anime and fan cultures in Japan. Beginning in the 1970s, when *shōjo* (for girls) manga was undergoing a renaissance, men were attracted to this content and crossed gender/genre

boundaries to produce and consume it (Galbraith, forthcoming b). The first appearance of the word lolicon in manga was Wada Shinji's *Stumbling Upon a Cabbage Field* (Kyabetsu batake de tsumazuite), published in *shōjo* manga magazine *Bessatsu Margaret* in June 1974. In a story that parodies *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Wada calls Lewis Carroll a lolicon, with a footnote explaining his "strange character of liking only small children." It is shocking that Wada, an adult male artist, would include such a footnote in a manga magazine ostensibly targeting young girls, but this was likely an inside joke for adult men reading his work, which points to the broader phenomenon of male readers of *shōjo* manga. The founders of the Comic Market,⁵ themselves adult male readers of *shōjo* manga, advertised their event in *Bessatsu Shōjo Comic* (Shimotsuki 2008: 11), a *shōjo* manga magazine that was likely read by men with shared interests. Although the existence of these men has gone largely without comment, they are an important part of the story of "otaku," here referring to certain kinds of manga and anime fans, in Japan. For example, Fujita Hisashi argues that male fans of *shōjo* manga "sought friends who shared their interests and became the early 'otaku'" (Fujita 1989: 130).

Also in the 1970s, men who had grown up with manga and anime began to be attracted to "cute" and "cartoony" characters, or manga/anime-style characters, as opposed to those drawn in the more "realistic" and "adult" style of *gekiga*. Among these men was Azuma Hideo, who is considered a pioneer of *bishōjo* (cute girl) manga. Azuma exposed and explored the sexuality of cute and cartoony characters, which had long existed in the foundational manga and anime of Tezuka Osamu and his followers, but had been a "taboo" and "unspeakable thing."⁶ Azuma was not alone in his interests. Male fans of manga and anime began to gather at places such as Manga Garō, a café that had anime cels and fanzines on display (Morikawa 2011: 182–183), where they spoke about attraction to cute and cartoony girl characters such as Pipi from Tomino Yoshiyuki's *Triton of the Sea* (Umi no Toriton, 1972) and Clara from Takahata Isao's *Heidi, Girl of the Alps* (Arupusu no shōjo Haiji, 1974).⁷ Manga Garō regulars drew manga/anime-style girl characters in a communal notebook, which raised awareness of shared interests. It was here that Hirukogami Ken wrote, "I am a lolicon" (Morikawa 2011: 184). Hirukogami's *Alice* (Arisu, 1978) is remembered as the first lolicon fanzine, but it would not be the last. Oki Yukao, an assistant to Azuma Hideo, recruited Azuma, Hirukogami and Nishina Sō'ichi, and the four together produced the legendary fanzine *Cybele* (Shiberu, 1979). As Azuma recalls, "I wanted friends. I thought that there absolutely must be others who like this sort of thing somewhere" (Azuma and Yamamoto 2011: 141). Sharing interests at Manga Garō led to sharing interests through the fanzine *Cybele* at the Comic Market, which was itself established by male fans of *shōjo* manga looking to share interests and make friends.

Although the content of *Cybele* shocked many (Takekuma 2003: 107), subsequent issues swelled in popularity with the rising tide of attraction to manga/anime-style characters. In 1979, the same year that the first issue of

Cybele was released, Miyazaki Hayao's *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* (Rupan sansei: Kariosutoro no shiro) sparked a subgenre of fanzines about its young heroine: "Clarisse magazines" (Takatsuki 2010: 97–102). This led to the belated discovery of the character Lana from Miyazaki's TV anime *Future Boy Conan* (Mirai shōnen Konan, 1978). Finally, Oshii Mamoru's TV anime adaptation of *Invader Lum* (Urusei yatsura, 1981–86), a bawdy romantic comedy featuring a buxom alien babe in a tigerskin bikini based on the beloved manga (1978–87) by Takahashi Rumiko, spurred manga/anime-style character attraction to new heights. The moment was christened by the foundation of *Lemon People* (Remon pīpuru, 1982–98), a commercial manga magazine that boldly claimed on its cover to feature "lolicon comics." Inspired by Yonezawa Yoshihiro, one of the founders of the Comic Market, anime magazines that had originally focused on sci-fi fare such as *Space Battleship Yamato* (Uchū senkan Yamato, 1974–75) and *Mobile Suit Gundam* (Kidō senshi Gandamu, 1979–80) began to talk about the "the lolicon boom."

The lolicon boom is an important chapter in the history of manga, anime and fan cultures in Japan. In fact, it is hard to speak with any specificity without addressing the moment and its influence. The first pornographic animation produced in Japan was the *Lolita Anime* series (1984–85) by Wonder Kids, which was based on work published in *Lemon People*. *Lolita Anime* was quickly followed by another *Lolita Anime* series (1984–85), this time by Nik-katsu and based on the work of Uchiyama Aki, the so-called "king of lolicon." At this point, erotic or pornographic works in the manga/anime style, which is to say those featuring cute and cartoony girl characters, were all associated with the term lolicon. To put it another way, lolicon was not necessarily about attraction to young girl characters, let alone real children, but rather attraction to cute, cartoony, manga/anime-style characters. This is clear in the original debate about "otaku," which appeared in the pages of *bishōjo* comic magazine *Manga Burikko* in 1983 and focused on a critique of manga and anime fans attracted to fictional girl characters instead of real women (see Galbraith 2015 for an overview). In this debate, lolicon was a keyword.

Brief review of research on lolicon

Given its importance, it is not surprising that lolicon has been well researched in Japan over the course of decades, which has led to numerous insights. In the literature, we find that lolicon refers to "desire for two-dimensional images (manga, anime) rather than realistic things" (Akagi 1993: 230). Such an orientation comes from growing up with manga and anime and becoming attracted to manga/anime-style, cute, cartoony characters (Nagayama 2014: 83–87; Saitō 2011: 30–31, 87–89). Characters are not compensating for something more "real," but rather are in their fiction the object of affection (Akagi 1993: 230–231; Schodt 1996: 48; Shigematsu 1999: 131–132). This has

been described as “finding sexual objects in fiction in itself” (Saitō 2011: 16), which in discussions of lolicon is made explicitly distinct from desire for and abuse of children (Saitō 2011: 6–7, 30–31). In the 1990s, when the Japanese media linked a child molester and murderer to lolicon, the image of otaku as a “reserve army of criminals” confused about the difference between fiction and reality took hold in Japan. Note that the conflation of lolicon with desire for actual children obscures the possibility of an orientation of desire toward fiction as such. It is not a coincidence that even as lolicon became a “four-letter word” (Alt 2014a) it was replaced by *moe*, which refers to the same attraction to and affection for fictional characters *consciously separate from reality*. From early writings to the present, researchers suggest that lolicon artists are playing with symbols and working with tropes, which does not reflect or contribute to sexual pathology or crime (Tsuchimoto 1989: 110; Nagayama 2014: 129–130).

The debate about “harmful manga” in Japan in the 1990s concluded that manga, whatever the content of the drawings may be, does not harm anyone in its production and does not cause demonstrable harm to others in its distribution and consumption (Schodt 1996: 49–53). On the contrary, the literature on lolicon suggests that it might be good for some people. Such manga and anime speak to a deep discomfort with hegemonic social and sexual roles (Editors 1989: 2–3; Akagi 1993: 233–234; Kinsella 2000: 124). Fiction can open up imaginative dimensions of sex and allow people to work through them (Shigematsu 1999: 146–148; Saitō 2011: 24–26, 30–31, 117, 126, 156–158, 162; Nagayama 2014: 148–150, 197–198). It was on these grounds that feminists, lawyers and artists with no personal interest in lolicon nevertheless defended the freedom to produce and consume it in debates about “obscene” and “unhealthy” manga and anime in the 2000s (Cather 2012: 233; McLelland 2011: 355–356, 358–359, 361). It was precisely because of this long history of debating the connection and distinction between fiction and reality that Japan decided in 2014 that manga and anime, whatever the content of the drawings may be, should not be categorized as child pornography, which took international journalists by surprise. While it appears that Japan has come to the conclusion that actual and virtual forms should not be collapsed together in regulation, many Anglophone countries have not done the same when it comes to child pornography. While the stereotype in Japan in the 1990s was that otaku could not distinguish between fiction and reality, it is now countries other than Japan that are conflating the two in law and criticizing Japan for not doing the same. Otaku bashing has become Japan bashing in the media, but the issue is still lolicon.

Case study: “a moral firestorm”

In the context of its use among manga and anime fans in Japan in the 1970s and 1980s, lolicon was not associated with child pornography or desire for actual children, but rather desire for manga/anime-style, cute, cartoony girl

characters. At present, such characters are more popular than realistic variants in erotic and pornographic manga, anime and games in Japan. Not only is the lolicon boom an important chapter in the history of manga, anime and fan cultures in Japan that contributed to the development of present-day forms, but a discussion of lolicon also opens a window on to sexual politics in media consumer society. With this in mind, in 2009, as part of a book project, I began to interview artists, critics and people involved with the lolicon boom. Among them was Uchiyama Aki, remembered as the "number one bestseller of lolicon manga" in Japan in the early 1980s. Uchiyama is in many ways a symbol of the lolicon boom: he published in not only *Lemon People*, but also the mainstream manga magazine *Shōnen Champion*; he produced 160 pages of manga a month to meet demand; his work is the basis of the *Lolita Anime* series by Nikkatsu. However, when the lolicon boom ended around 1984, Uchiyama disappeared from the public eye.⁸

Given his prominence in the lolicon boom, I planned to include the interview with Uchiyama alongside some of his drawings in my book, which had evolved into an exploration of attraction to and affection for fictional characters in Japan. Although it was for a commercial press and targeting a general audience of English speakers, I did not see an issue in including Uchiyama. The book passed all the usual rounds of internal review without any complications. In the final stages, my editor sent a PDF of the book to manga and anime translators, critics and scholars, in hopes of getting endorsements for the back cover. As my editor went through this process, she received some comments from a reviewer that disturbed her greatly. She explained to me in a panicked email:⁹

We would like to make some last minute changes to the book.

The impetus for this was a comment by ****. I sent him a PDF of the book asking him for an endorsement and he gave us a nice one (which I will place on the cover and run by you before printing), but he also had this to say:

"I read through the book, and I'm sure that it will do well, although I do hope that it doesn't also ignite a moral firestorm in the United States. Hopefully, you are fully aware of how controversial some of this material may be in more conservative circles."

This comment led to a lot of discussion here about the content of the book and its market in the States. We want the main market to be teenage/young adult and not academic. We also don't want to cause what **** calls "a moral firestorm."

With these two concerns in mind, my superiors read the manuscript. I wanted a second opinion from them. I was sure they would come back and demand that the Uchiyama Aki chapter, for example, be cut, but they thought the interviews were OK. They thought the most potentially controversial part of the book was your intro, with far too much mention of SEX and EROTICISM! They have asked us to tone it down [...].

The point was also made that something missing from the intro is an authorial stance. What do you, the author, think? What have you got to say, as a fan, to other fans about whether this is good or bad or sick or normal? [...]

**** made a funny comment about otaku in the States being forced to live under a bridge wearing an ankle bracelet. We don't want that to happen to you. Or us.

While I did agree to many of the edits, I did not agree to make a statement about whether or not I found attraction to and affection for fictional characters to be “good or bad or sick or normal.” I also asked my editor to reconsider the decision to cut all discussion of eroticism and sex from the introduction, which would paint a very sanitized and ultimately untrue picture of manga, anime and fan cultures in Japan. She eventually agreed, but nevertheless did not want any mention of lolicon, which she thought would raise flags about child pornography and pedophilia. In the end, at her insistence, the interview with Uchiyama Aki was cut. The content of the interview is rather innocuous (see Appendix I in this volume), and although a few of his drawings included in the layout are somewhat risqué, they are not out of line with what many other artists produce today. I can only conclude that it was the strong association with “lolicon” – that particular “four-letter word” (Alt 2014a) – that made Uchiyama unsuitable for the book. Lolicon generally and Uchiyama specifically could have no place in a book introducing Japanese media and popular culture. Ultimately, the refusal to look at and discuss the content of lolicon media not only makes it feel objectionable and obscene, but also forecloses more nuanced understandings and positions such as those emerging in Japan.

My publisher's decision was made to avoid igniting “a moral firestorm,” which came packaged with the imagined threat of everyone getting burned. If they were associated with presumed perverts, pedophiles and predators, the publisher's image might be damaged, it might lose customers and sales or face legal action. They warned me that we all might be arrested, put on a registry somewhere and ostracized – “forced to live under a bridge wearing an ankle bracelet.” Recall that we faced this imagined threat for doing three things: one, writing about lolicon without adopting the position that it is bad and sick; two, listening to people involved and providing a forum for their words; and three, including images of manga/anime-style, cute, cartoony girl characters to illustrate what was being discussed. My publisher was responding to the imagined threat of a moral firestorm, of being perceived as defending and standing with perverts, pedophiles and predators, if not also being one of them, which might ruin our lives. Rather than take the risk, my publisher decided that words and images that had not previously been objectionable – and my editor and her superiors did not agree on this – would now trigger a response from “conservative circles” and could not be included in the book.

Context for the publisher's response

While my publisher's concerns may seem exaggerated, I do think that the threat of a moral firestorm that they imagined (albeit belatedly) was real in the context of the reception of manga and anime in the United States at the time. They had every reason to believe that the association of lolicon might be child pornography, which might trigger a backlash against the book. If there was a moral firestorm, book sales would suffer, and even if they did not, the publisher's image certainly would. Indeed, at the time of my publisher's decision, there were already high-profile incidents of publishers backing down when faced with a moral firestorm.

In 2007, for example, Seven Seas Entertainment abandoned its planned English-language release of the manga *The Time of Children* (Kodomo no jikan, 2005–13). The project was severely criticized online by people who could not believe that the company was releasing this story of a precocious grade-school girl who tries to seduce her teacher. Jason DeAngelis, president of Seven Seas Entertainment, at first stood firm and promised to "have an open dialogue with the large book chains and other vendors. My intention is to make them fully aware of this debate [...] and] familiarize them more fully with the content" (DeAngelis 2007a). Open dialogue and familiarizing people with the content before they judge it seem reasonable enough, but before DeAngelis could act, vendors canceled their orders for the now toxic title. In a later statement, DeAngelis agreed that *The Time of Children* "cannot be considered appropriate for the US market by any reasonable standard" (DeAngelis 2007b). Further:

I love the manga industry and I delight in my job, and I would rather not take the risk of causing problems that could undermine this industry, especially in light of the escalating media scrutiny we have been getting on this title [...]. If the controversy continues to escalate further, it could reflect very poorly on Seven Seas in the eyes of not only those who oppose [... *The Time of Children*] within the manga community, but in the eyes of practically anyone who does not understand manga.

(DeAngelis 2007b)

The rationale for abandoning *The Time of Children* is not so different from my own publisher's decision to cut the interview with Uchiyama Aki: Both publishers would rather not take the risk of causing problems that could undermine the industry surrounding Japanese media and popular culture. The same fear is there that manga and anime and fans of such media might be perceived in the wrong way: manga and anime as perverted, if not child pornography; fans of such media as perverts, if not pedophiles and predators. While DeAngelis was at first interested in explaining the manga's content to those who did not understand, he backed away when faced with media scrutiny and people who do not understand manga but object to it anyway. He backed away from the imagined threat of a moral firestorm. In the end, he

agrees that a relationship – whatever that means – involving a grade-school girl and her teacher is objectionable and “cannot be considered appropriate for the US market by any reasonable standard.” As it was in the specific case of *The Time of Children*, so it is in general with lolicon.

In contrast, the original author of *The Time of Children*, Watashiya Kaworu, a female artist who debuted in *Bessatsu Shōjo Comic* (targeted at girls), responded to the controversy by writing on her blog, “[t]he boundaries on depictions of loli[con] and so on vary with each locale, era, and culture” (Anime News Network 2007), which raises questions about what is meant by lolicon, why it is or is not acceptable and by what standard. In truth, Seven Seas Entertainment played a part in setting up the moral firestorm when they decided to give Watashiya’s manga the English-language title of *Nymphet* (rather than *The Time of Children*, which is the literal translation of *Kodomo no jikan*). The manga is not nearly as racy as the proposed title suggests, but even if it were, would it be objectionable simply because it deals with the taboo subject of cross-generational sex? What about Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955)? Would this literary classic be inappropriate if it were manga? Regardless of depth or complexity, if *Lolita* were manga, it would, like *The Time of Children*, no doubt be categorized as lolicon, which is perceived as objectionable in the Anglophone world.

Even if we grant that market pressures and bad publicity are reason enough to justify the decision not to publish manga and artists associated with lolicon, what of the talk of being forced to wear an ankle bracelet? That is, what do we make of the potential legal and criminal consequences of publishing lolicon media in the United States? To understand the imagined threat of the ankle bracelet, we must consider the broader context of escalating concerns about sexuality, children and risk. In her pioneering work on the politics of sexuality, anthropologist Gayle Rubin explains how institutional and social forces separate sex into “good” and “bad” forms (Rubin 2011: 180) (as my editor put it, “good or bad or sick or normal”). Good sex is safe, non-commercial, non-violent, coupled, heterosexual, focused on male genital penetration of the female genitals, monogamous and aimed toward childbirth, while bad sex is the opposite (Rubin 2011: 151). Among particularly despised forms of sexuality, Rubin includes “transsexuals, transvestites, fetishists, sadomasochists, sex workers such as prostitutes and porn models, and the lowliest of all, those whose eroticism transgresses generational boundaries” (Rubin 2011: 149). To understand the position of “the lowliest of all” on this list, it helps to know that Rubin formulated her ideas after experiencing a “child-porn panic” in the United States in the late 1970s, which led to harsher laws to punish offenders across the country (Rubin 2011: 142). It is against this backdrop of elevated concern for children in relation to adult sexuality that cross-generational sex becomes “the lowliest of all” bad sex. Cross-generational sex raises concerns about abuse of power, violation of innocence and damaging a child for life. Here we see how sexuality comes to be perceived as a threat to others, and indeed to social order itself (Rubin 2011: 151).¹⁰

Rubin's work was partly inspired by the philosopher Michel Foucault, who expands on the connections between sexuality, children and risk. In a public dialogue in 1978, Foucault noted a shift from punishing illegal acts to protecting vulnerable populations, which he explains as follows:

[T]here are people for whom others' sexuality may become a permanent danger. In this category, of course, are children, who may find themselves at the mercy of an adult sexuality that is alien to them and may well be harmful to them. Hence there is legislation that appeals to this notion of a vulnerable population, a "high-risk population."

(Foucault 1988: 276)

For Foucault, the issue is that sexuality becomes a risk that must be managed – a "roaming danger" or "omnipresent phantom" (Foucault 1988: 281). Foucault's identification of the child at risk has proven almost prophetic in recent years, which have seen an explosion of concern for children in relation to adult sexuality (McLelland 2005: 61; see also boyd 2014: Chapter 4). Catherine Lumby points out that child abuse, which is paradoxically seen as totally aberrant and yet widespread in contemporary society, has achieved "a phantasmic status" (Lumby 1998: 47–48). As Rubin reminds us, "[g]reat and mighty edifices have been built on the basis of such phantasms" (Rubin 2011: 169). Institutional and social edifices meant to protect children from potential predators invent virtual victims: children who might be harmed, at risk of harm, virtually harmed. Nowhere is this invention of virtual victims more apparent than in the treatment of manga and anime as child pornography: In the absence of an actual child, the fictional character is treated as a child, who is abused virtually; manga and anime featuring fictional characters in sexual scenarios are treated as child pornography, which collapses together actual and virtual forms; manga and anime are said to put actual children at risk of sex crimes inspired by such media.¹¹

If we follow Foucault's arguments on biopower, or regulation of subjects through control of bodies and populations (Foucault 1976: 140), then biopower in the contemporary moment extends beyond actual bodies and populations to virtual ones. The state acts on the virtual to control "*processes of emergence* that may become determinate threats" (Anderson 2012: 34) to actual bodies and populations. Practically, this means surveillance of the virtual, of interactions with fictional characters, which *might* reveal a person's dangerous sexuality and *might* lead to criminal sex acts. In short, a person can be guilty of virtual sex crimes, of crimes with no actual victim, because a determinate threat may emerge from the processes of interaction with fictional characters. Here we see the invention of virtual criminals, which is characteristic of new regimes of law and order (Hall et al. 1978: 8, 35, 43, 45–46). Sexuality, even when it involves only imaginary others, can be dangerous, criminal and just plain bad. The line between good and bad sex, as Rubin reminds us, is "imaginary" (Rubin 2011: 151), so it is fitting that the line is drawn in the imaginary.

While this may all seem purely theoretical, it is in fact already in practice in many parts of the world, including the United States, typically considered a bastion of freedom of expression, but one that is also struggling to surveil and respond to emergent threats. In May 2006, US postal inspectors raised flags about a man named Christopher Handley, who they suspected of importing “cartoon images of objectionable content” from Japan (Anime News Network 2008).¹² Authorities seized more than 1,200 items from Handley’s home and accused him of possessing “drawings of children being sexually abused” and “depictions of minors engaging in sexual conduct” (Anime News Network 2008, 2010). Of the 1,200 items, approximately 80 were deemed objectionable, many from *Comic LO*, which is a lolicon manga magazine.¹³ Faced with a mandatory minimum sentence of five years if convicted, and afraid that the material would immediately repulse a jury without any knowledge of manga and anime, Handley accepted a reduced sentence for a guilty plea in May 2009 (Chase 2010). He was sentenced to six months in jail and, although not forced to register as a sex offender, ordered to “participate in a treatment program, to include psychological testing and a polygraph examination, as directed by the U. S. Probation Officer” during three years of supervised release and five years of probation (Anime News Network 2010). Although there is no evidence that he ever purchased or possessed child pornography featuring actual children, Handley is treated by the American judicial system, and one assumes those who know him from this case, as a pedophile and potential predator who needs to be monitored and reformed. Because the case was never taken to trial in an open courtroom, we do not know for certain what offensive material Handley purchased and possessed, but he was and is judged all the same. Under the heading “kiddie porn” in an introductory criminology textbook in wide use in the United States, we find that Handley, “regardless of your personal thoughts,” is guilty (Siegel 2011: 15).

The example of a moral firestorm ignited by the planned English-language release of *The Time of Children* and concomitant imagined threat of legal and criminal consequences embodied by Christopher Handley were not distant memories when my book was in production in 2014, and they certainly informed the external reviewer’s comments and my publisher’s response. One can understand why an editor, who receives an email containing ominous warnings about “a moral firestorm,” “conservative circles” and an “ankle bracelet” would take it to her superiors and insist on cuts to the book to excise the discussion of lolicon. It does not matter that the content was not objectionable on initial review, my editor and her superiors did not agree that it was objectionable on subsequent review or that the threat of a moral firestorm was an imagined one. One can understand backing off lolicon to avoid getting burned – just to be safe. While I find fault with no one involved, I would like to point out that my publisher’s decision reflected and contributed to a larger problem of ignorance. Refusal to look at and discuss lolicon manga and anime leads to ignorance about it and judgments based on ignorance. The insidious power of self-censorship to avoid potential

consequences is a serious limitation to free thought and open dialogue. It not only closes down the space for dissenting opinions, but also prevents understanding of the issues at hand. To borrow a turn of phrase from Kirsten Cather (in this volume), we do not give lolicon "a fair trial." We do not see it, but assume that we somehow still know what it is. The decision to cut the Uchiyama Aki interview seems so problematic to me because it makes his work invisible and silences him, which not only eliminates a chance to understand lolicon, but also makes it taboo and unspeakable. By not actually looking at images and listening to people involved, we all too often do not know what we are talking about and rush to judgment based on fear of the unknown/other.

Global feedback and self-regulation in Japan

In Japan, self-censorship has expanded into a system of private companies and public facilities self-regulating in response to moral firestorms or the threat of them. The results can be stunning. In October 1999, a new child pornography law in Japan – passed amid intense global criticism (see Cather, this volume) – raised the possibility that certain forms of manga might now be illegal. Rather than wait for action by police and prosecutors, Kinokuniya Books, a major retailer, sent a fax to all of its stores telling employees to "remove anything suspicious" from the shelves (Fujimoto 2011: 30). Among the manga removed were Miura Kentarō's *Berserk* (1989–) and Inoue Takehiko's *Vagabond* (1998–), both series for young adults that have won the Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize. Significantly, neither of these works could by any stretch of the imagination be categorized as pornography, let alone child pornography, but they were still deemed suspicious because the dark fantasy series *Berserk* shows a child being sexually abused and the historical drama *Vagabond* shows an "underage" samurai warrior having sex (Fujimoto 2011: 30). This extreme example demonstrates that the strategy of self-regulation can be an ultimately conservative one; preemptively self-regulating can have a serious chilling effect on adult forms of expression.

The rush to remove suspicious material from shelves continued in the next decade. In 2008, complaints from a handful of citizens led the Sakai Municipal Library in Osaka to remove around 5,000 books from its shelves, which were young adult novels focused on romance between male characters. When feminists and free-speech advocates protested that not a single one of the books had been deemed an "unhealthy publication" – that is, while they may not have been to the taste of critics, there were no legal grounds for the removal of the books – all 5,000 titles were returned to the shelves. While many perceived the Sakai case to be a victory, manga editor, critic and educator Fujimoto Yukari points out that the decision to remove the titles based on pressure from conservative circles should raise serious questions about the decision-making processes involved in such self-regulation (Fujimoto 2011: 30–31). The books were returned when pressure was applied from the

opposite direction, but decision makers at the library remained ignorant of (or chose to remain silent on) the content of the books, which they did not discuss publicly. If there had been no opposition, the books would have stayed off shelves. Such opposition is in fact rare, because few want to be openly associated with objectionable material. Fujimoto points out that when the Tokyo Metropolitan government attempted to pass revisions to an ordinance and expand its power to name unhealthy publications, liberal politicians who were in principle opposed were nonetheless cowed into not voicing dissent by smear campaigns that referred to them as “porn politicians” and “the enemy of children” (Fujimoto 2011: 37). Revisions to the ordinance were passed in December 2010 (see McLelland 2011).

When journalists in the Anglophone world uncritically associate manga and anime with child pornography (Ripley et al. 2014) and treat lolicon like a four-letter word (Alt 2014a), this feeds back into conservative politics in Japan. Consider the example of debate show *TV Takkuru*, which in an episode aired on September 1, 2014 posed to panelists, including Tsuchiya Masataka, a member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the following question: “Do we need to regulate violent lolicon anime?” Framing the debate with explicit reference to an English-language article calling Japan the Empire of Child Pornography (Adelstein and Kubo 2014), the examples of lolicon marshaled by the show’s producers included *The Time of Children* – an anime adaptation of a previously unobjectionable manga for young adults, which global feedback had made objectionable. From there, the range of objectionable material continued to expand until it included “bathing scenes” and eventually anything with “cute girl characters as protagonists.” By this last definition, much of anime, which has been celebrated for its strong female characters (Napier 2005: 11–12), is suddenly suspect. We see at work in *TV Takkuru* what Amy Adler calls the “pedophilic gaze” (Adler 2001: 256–264), or the tendency to scrutinize all images of children for potentially pedophilic elements, which makes seemingly innocuous images into child pornography and viewers into suspected sex criminals. Given the pedophilic gaze, any manga/anime-style, cute, cartoony girl character can be linked to a discussion of lolicon as child pornography, which is precisely what happened in an article in *The New Yorker* accusing American music star Pharrell Williams of producing a “lolicon video” (Alt 2014a). While we might find such claims absurd, they collectively paint a picture of Japan as the Empire of Child Pornography and legitimate regulatory impulses. Back on the set of *TV Takkuru*, conservative politician Tsuchiya answers the question, “Do we need to regulate violent lolicon anime?” – which ignores regulations already in place and the ambiguity of what is meant by lolicon – with a confident and righteous, “Yes.”

As we have seen, judgments of manga and anime in terms of lolicon and child pornography are often based on ignorance, and these judgments tend to discourage free thought and open dialogue on difficult issues. Although the anti-regulation panelists on *TV Takkuru* appeared to have won the debate,

one wonders how much longer such people can continue when opponents label manga and anime – lolicon or otherwise – with toxic terms such as child pornography, and juxtapose the content with stories of molested and murdered children. If allowed, spurious arguments that collapse together actual and virtual forms of child pornography, manga and anime and pornography, and real and imagined harm to vulnerable bodies and populations win based solely on their powerful emotional appeal to “think of the children” (Rubin 2011: 141). Ironically, the more we “think of the children” in the abstract, the less we actually look at the offending media and material objects and evaluate demonstrable harm to children. Rather than grounded discussion, we end up with ungrounded judgment.

The limits of cool Japan

Some readers might be thinking that even if a commercial publisher shied away from lolicon for fear of a moral firestorm, an academic publisher certainly would not. Perhaps, but academia is not without its limits. For example, when I proposed to include drawings by Uchiyama Aki in this chapter, Mark McLelland, the editor of this volume, expressed concern that he might be criminally liable for “making available” child abuse images that would be prohibited in the United Kingdom and Australia (see McLelland 2005; Eiland 2009). The drawings, therefore, have not been included in this volume, which is released by Routledge, self-advertised as “the world’s leading academic publisher in the Humanities and Social Sciences.”¹⁴ The decision is no different from my commercial publisher, and the result is also the same: The reader cannot see and does not know what Uchiyama drew, cannot judge it for themselves and is left with the impression that it must have been terribly objectionable. It does not matter how much I tell the reader otherwise. The images are associated with lolicon, which is thought to be a form of child pornography and so becomes refused content.

Neither the line dividing the commercial from the academic nor the one dividing the academic from the political is bright and bold, as is evident in the study of Japanese media and popular culture. From a somewhat cynical standpoint, the establishment and growth of a field of study dedicated to contemporary Japanese media and popular culture seems deeply tied to shifting economic and political fortunes in Japan and the United States, or a “crisis of Japan Studies” (Harootunian and Sakai 1999: 593–598). The 1990s saw the decline of the Japanese economy and a shift of geopolitical interest toward East Asian neighbors. On the one hand, within Asian Studies, fewer people were signing up for classes on Japan and more were taking classes on China and South Korea; on the other hand, within Japan Studies, the interest was not in economics and political science, but rather media and popular culture, most especially anime, which was rapidly building toward a full-blown boom (Landsberg 2011). The crisis of Japan Studies, of legitimizing academic interest in that nation, could be resolved by aligning oneself with

the phenomenon of “cool Japan,” which assured us that Japan, through the powerful appeal of its media and popular culture, was still economically and politically relevant in the world. This renewed interest in Japan in the United States was in turn a boon to the struggling government of Japan (Leheny 2006: 214–216, 220–223; Choo 2011: 85, 87–88). In many ways, the interests of Japan Studies programs in the United States and the Japanese government aligned in encouraging the growth of “Japan fans.” The aim of such encouragement is no secret: In 2015, the Japanese government announced that it would invest US\$15 million for funding Japan Studies at nine US universities as part of a “push to counter the growing influence of China and South Korea” (Umekawa 2015).¹⁵ It would be nice to think that only governments are so nationalistic and territorial, but Japan Studies programs also worry about the growing influence of China and South Korea, and losing students and institutional funding to China Studies and Korean Studies.

In an environment of inter-nationalism that encourages studies of and by Japan fans (Iwabuchi 2010: 92, 95), there is a demand for research on manga and anime, but what about research on lolicon? My sense is that one can criticize lolicon, but anything beyond that is unwelcome. Actually looking at the material and talking to producers and consumers of it is taking things too far. To the extent that lolicon manga and anime have been condemned as child pornography, any discussion of them, academic or otherwise, is severely limited. James Kincaid notes that the narrative of child pornography and abuse is a “gothic” one, where there is only good and bad, right and wrong, for the children or against them (Kincaid 1998: 10–11). A person who does not immediately denounce such material is seen as standing against children – “the enemy of children” (Fujimoto 2011: 37). Such a person is seen as standing with the pedophiles and predators – one of them, not one of us – and is guilty by association. One can recognize the pressures of a gothic narrative in my publisher’s demand for an “authorial stance” on whether certain forms of manga and anime are “good or bad or sick or normal,” but one is forced into the same compromised position in academia. Here, too, one is judged for not taking the only acceptable position on an issue that is not open for debate.

For example, in 2010, I was writing an academic article on lolicon, which I saw as an intervention into the discussion of certain forms of manga as harmful or hindering the healthy development of young people in Japan. It seemed to me that critics in Japan were emboldened by the negative reception of adult manga, anime and games overseas. Globally, lolicon had emerged as a keyword to refer to the problem of (virtual) child pornography in Japan, but there was much confusion about its meaning. When I told a university professor (American, male), who I consider a friend, that I was writing an article on lolicon, he advised that I not go through with the publication, which would amount to “career suicide.” If I were perceived as someone “interested” in this topic, he explained, it could ruin my job prospects. I should wait to publish such “provocative” material until I have tenure.¹⁶

Ignoring his good council, I did publish the article in a peer-reviewed journal (Galbraith 2011), which has led to me being known as "the lolicon guy." That I have been labeled this way means that I effectively did commit career suicide. The lolicon guy: Does that mean a guy who studies lolicon or a guy who has a Lolita complex? The lolicon guy seems to suggest both. So career suicide: Who wants to hire or work with the lolicon guy, whose work reveals his perverse "interests?" If, as Karen Kelsky suggests, the academic job market is in many ways comparable to a popularity contest, then researching lolicon is a mistake in two ways: "picking the wrong things to highlight" and "underestimating the importance of likeability" (Kelsky 2012).¹⁷ Lolicon highlights the wrong things: on one scale, it risks causing problems that could undermine the industry (commercial, academic) surrounding Japanese media and popular culture; on another, picking this topic supposedly highlights my own perverse "interests." The lolicon guy is not very likeable; he might not find research funding or stable employment. As my university professor friend dutifully warned me, it is better not to take the risk of writing about provocative topics like lolicon.¹⁸

Just as there are social, institutional and national politics that allow and limit the study of Japan, so too are there politics to the study of popular culture. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall draws our attention to the "structuring principle of 'the popular,'" or "the tensions and oppositions between what belongs to the central domain of elite or dominant culture, and the culture of the 'periphery.' It is this opposition which constantly structures the domain of culture into the 'popular' and the 'non-popular'" (Hall 1998: 448). To understand "popular culture," then, we must look past particular forms to the dynamic processes of power that shape them. For example, Hall argues that, "[t]he magistrate and the evangelical police have, or ought to have, a more 'honoured' place in the history of popular culture than they have usually been accorded" (Hall 1998: 443). Indeed, "the magistrate" and "evangelical police" in Japan and beyond have certainly impacted the kinds of manga and anime that are produced, circulated and consumed, including lolicon, but they are not the only ones involved in structuring the popular. Hall explains:

What is more, a whole set of institutions and institutional processes are required to sustain each [dominant and peripheral culture] – and to continually mark the difference between them. The school and the education system is one such institution – distinguishing the valued part of the culture, the cultural heritage, the history to be transmitted, from the "valueless" part.

(Hall 1998: 448–449)

Peripheral cultural forms can become dominant cultural forms and "cultural heritage," just as popular culture can become unpopular culture. This is a dynamic and ongoing process, one in which researchers and educators are involved through producing and reproducing knowledge on cultural forms;

our evaluations are not politically neutral. For Hall, popular culture is a terrain of struggle or even a “battlefield” (Hall 1998: 451).

Particularly helpful in a discussion of national(izing) discourses such as “cool Japan” is what Hall calls “the terrain of national-popular culture” (Hall 1998: 451). Note the hyphen that connects the nation and certain cultural forms: the hyphen holding together a constellation of “national-popular,” for example “Japanese-popular” culture. Here we must consider not only the obvious example of cool Japan policy and its selection of media and popular culture to promote, but also our own educational institutions and practices of knowledge (re)production. When publishing and teaching courses on manga and anime as *Japanese* media and popular culture or connecting them to *Japanese* traditions, we are part of the processes shaping national-popular culture. Such publishing and teaching might find funding from the Japanese government or related promotional institutions – if, of course, the image and history of Japan transmitted is acceptable to the funders (Umekawa 2015; see also Miller, this volume). When selecting works by Tezuka Osamu and Miyazaki Hayao as manga and anime traditions, we are involved in deciding “the history to be transmitted” (Hall 1998: 449). We create a descriptive inventory that freezes popular culture into particular forms, which ignores the dynamics of selection and struggle over meaning. Our work is not politically neutral. One might, for example, exclude Uchiyama Aki and the lolicon boom from discussions of manga, anime and fan cultures to sanitize Japanese popular culture, or highlight them to reveal “Japanese pop culture’s dirty little secret” (Alt 2014b).

This is not a question of being right or wrong about Japan, but rather a reminder of the politics of writing and talking about Japanese popular culture. We are already on the terrain of struggle, already part of the institutional processes shaping Japanese popular culture, and to ignore our position is to abdicate the responsibility that comes with it. The academy is ideally a supportive environment for researching unpopular topics, which contributes to free thought, open dialogue and more nuanced positions, but, as we have seen in the case of lolicon, the threat of social and institutional repercussions has limited the range of acceptable topics of research on Japanese media and popular culture. One writes about certain topics because they are popular and tries to win a popularity contest for funding, publications and jobs (Kelsky 2012). This situation has led to an alarming silence on issues such as lolicon, which are of real importance and require long-term, in-depth research to understand. We can no longer remain silent on unpopular topics. Writing and talking about lolicon may risk igniting a moral firestorm and come with the imagined threat of one’s life being ruined, but the alternative is to be complicit with judgments based on ignorance, which lead to actual people losing their jobs and going to prison. This has to stop. It is time to take a position that challenges simple criticism or celebration of Japanese media and popular culture. It is time to stop the uncritical discussion of “weird Japan” and “cool Japan.” Only then will we be able to move on to more nuanced understandings and critiques of cultural politics.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the social, institutional and national politics that allow and limit the study of Japanese media and popular culture. I have argued that it is imperative to open up and maintain a space for researchers to take on unpopular topics, which challenge us to be critical without rushing to judgment. Through an unpopular topic such as lolicon, we can begin to question national(izing) discourses of "cool Japan" and "weird Japan," and go beyond them to more nuanced discussions of cultural politics. As Koichi Iwabuchi rightly points out, much is missing from simple criticisms and celebrations of Japanese media and popular culture:

We need a serious consideration of the sociohistorical contexts in which people passionately consume/appropriate media texts, and of the cultural politics and cultural economy involved in their active consuming practices. We must consider issues such as self-empowerment in terms of marginalized identity politics (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nation, and so on), coping with the tyranny of everyday life in the neoliberal world [and more].

(Iwabuchi 2010: 88)¹⁹

Here we see pathways for research on popular culture as a terrain of struggle in Japan, and Japan itself as a terrain of struggle, which is already global and in which we are involved. However, I have shown that researchers all too often choose to remain silent on the unpopular topic of lolicon rather than face potential consequences of being associated with it, which both reflects and contributes to broader problems. Manga and anime generally, and lolicon specifically, are condemned as child pornography; a commercial publisher cuts an interview on lolicon when faced with the imagined threat of a moral firestorm; another abandons the English-language release of a manga featuring cross-generational eroticism; an editor refrains from including line drawings labeled as lolicon in an academic volume for fear of being criminally liable for making them available; rather than introduce offending images in court, a man pleads guilty to possession of lolicon manga and is imprisoned; questioning the situation makes one a "lolicon guy" with suspect interests. The environment is not one conducive to critical thinking and open dialogue on difficult and important issues. Refusing to look at lolicon material and listen to people involved not only closes down the space for discussion and debate, but also actually prevents understanding of the issues at hand. The result is bias, fear and judgment of the unknown/other based on ignorance, which can ruin lives. To remain silent is to be complicit. It is time to face potential consequences and imagined threats and to speak openly about unpopular topics, even if doing so makes us unpopular as well.

Notes

- 1 For example, a 2008 report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is titled, “Measure and Framework for Strengthening Japan’s Public Diplomacy: To Increase the Number of People Understanding Japan and the Number of ‘Japan Fans’.”
- 2 For example on Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lolicon. While Wikipedia is well known for making information and images freely available, the fact that the online encyclopedia was hosting images in its “lolicon” and “pedophilia” entries led to major backlash from conservative circles and eventually the mass removal of offending images in 2010. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reporting_of_child_pornography_images_on_Wikimedia_Commons. In this chapter, I will discuss the impact of moral firestorms such as this one on free thought and open dialogue about lolicon.
- 3 Saitō Tamaki, a practicing psychiatrist, argues powerfully that, “bringing up the ‘Japanese Lolita complex’ is the wrong answer. Ethical considerations aside, attributing a given perverse tendency to an entire nation based on a mere impression is simply an unscientific fallacy” (Saitō 2011: 6–7; see also Shigematsu 1999: 135, 156). Nevertheless, this is exactly what happened in the summer of 2014.
- 4 For a discussion of the meaning of “otaku,” see Galbraith 2015.
- 5 First held in 1975, the Comic Market is an event for buying and selling self-published media, primarily short-run print publications. The majority of these publications are manga by fans of commercial manga, anime and games, which imagine relationships between existing characters. Although a violation of copyright law, and often containing graphic depictions of sex, the fan artists behind these works are generally not prosecuted in Japan. In fact, the Comic Market has grown into a massive event that attracts an average of half a million people, as well as massive amounts of media attention. See for example: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Hk_bj2ZqdE.
- 6 These quotes come from a dialogue between Azuma Hideo and Yonezawa Yoshihiro, one of the founders of the Comic Market, published in *Gekkan Out* in March 1982.
- 7 Although these shows were originally intended for young audiences, they attracted adolescent and even adult viewers (Ōtsuka and Sasakibara 2001: 195; Sasakibara 2004: 21).
- 8 Azuma Hideo also disappeared for many years, but made a comeback with diary manga about his personal struggles with alcoholism and depression (Azuma and Yamada 2011: 20). Meanwhile, Hirukogami Ken joined the Buddhist clergy to rid himself of worldly desires (Tsuchimoto 1989: 104–105).
- 9 I received this email on January 16, 2014. For issues of privacy, the name of the publisher, editor and external reviewer have been removed. The content of the email is abridged, but otherwise unaltered.
- 10 Gayle Rubin dubs this inflation of the threat of sexuality the “fallacy of misplaced scale” and “domino theory of sexual peril” (Rubin 2011: 149, 151).
- 11 Proposed revisions to the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youths in 2010 captured the essence of the virtual victim perfectly by introducing the awkward phrase “non-existent youth” (*hijitsuzai seishōnen*). See McLelland (2011).
- 12 Note how objectionable content is coming under increased scrutiny at a time of elevated concern about sexuality, which is not entirely without precedent. Indeed, Rubin highlights the role of “watchdog postal inspectors” in the child porn panic of the 1970s (Rubin 2011: 143).
- 13 LO stands for “Lolita Only.” See: www.akaneshinsha.co.jp/item/5309/.
- 14 See: www.routledge.com.
- 15 Some speculate that job candidates in these programs will be subject to screening, which sounds like a process to ensure that positions go to Japan fans. For examples

of how cultural gatekeepers can censure Japan scholars for promoting a somehow "incorrect" image of the nation, see Miller's chapter in this volume. When reading her chapter, note the alignment of academic and funding/promotional institutions and the evaluation of research subjects.

- 16 This was not an isolated incident. On October 27, 2014, I organized a mini symposium on the legal limits of, and media outrage over, sexuality in Japanese popular culture. The symposium was held at Temple University, Japan Campus, where I teach part time; free and open to the public, it drew well over 100 people. The following day, a co-worker (American, male) stopped by my desk on campus to congratulate me on the success of the symposium, but wondered aloud if that same success might spell my doom. I would now always be associated with issues of "perversity" (*hentai*), he explained, which might make me "unhireable." A video of my talk at the event was made available online, which my co-worker jokingly said would come back to haunt me. See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7HZ9-E8UrA&feature=em-subsdigest.
- 17 In a grant-writing seminar, an instructor explained to me that, "[s]ome topics are more charismatic than others."
- 18 The risk is not, however, the same for all people. As Kirsten Cather points out (in this volume), "It is one thing to tackle [...] child porn as a research subject when one is a mother, and another when one is a single man." In other words, when one might be labeled a "lolicon guy." If one is not distant enough from the topic, then it is no longer safe to research.
- 19 This also resonates with Jonathan E. Abel's call to step back from the overheated discourse of cool Japan and contribute to the "uncooling" of research topics to better "comprehend meanings in history and culture" (Abel 2011: 66).

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Appendix I

A bestselling manga artist in Japan in the early 1980s, Uchiyama Aki helped popularize *lolicon* works featuring cute girl characters in erotic situations. Uchiyama reportedly produced 160 pages of manga a month, which were published not only in niche magazines such as *Lemon People*, but also mainstream ones such as *Shōnen Champion*. Disappearing from the scene after the end of the *lolicon* boom in 1984, Uchiyama today lives a reclusive life and publishes only fanzines. In this interview, he explains how editorial and market demands shaped his work. It all began with a fateful decision to sex up a submission that he originally made to a *shōjo* (for girls) manga magazine.

PATRICK W. GALBRAITH (PG): Tell us a little about how you got started.

UCHIYAMA AKI (UA): I started drawing when I was in college. I was in the manga club, and producing fanzines [...] There was a guy in the manga club who was drawing *shōjo* manga. He said, “I’m going to submit something, so why don’t you submit, too?” I wasn’t particularly interested in *shōjo* manga, but I wanted my work to be published and *shōjo* manga magazines take a lot of reader submissions. So I drew *shōjo* manga and submitted it to *Ribon*, which is a pretty famous *shōjo* manga magazine, but they rejected me. I had put a lot of work into it and didn’t want the manuscript to go to waste. I started to think of places where I could resubmit. At the time, publishing companies could make money selling a variety of niche magazines. Sex sells, of course, and that was what most niche magazines were dealing in. So I added some pages of nudity and submitted my manuscript to a niche magazine, which accepted it. I submitted similar manuscripts to other magazines, all of which were accepted. Then publishers started coming to me with requests.

PG: What did these editors ask of you?

UA: The request would be for eight, 16 or 32 pages, and would include how many of those pages had to include nudity. I think the average was about 30 percent. That was the minimum, but the policy seemed to be the more nudity the better. Apart from the obligatory nudity, I could do whatever I wanted with the pages. It was really an incredible amount of creative

freedom, if you think about it, and I wish I had made better use of it, but I was just struggling to get my work done. I really needed the editors to tell me what to do.

PG: Even for *Andoro Trio*, your manga serialized in *Shōnen Champion*?

UA: Yes. The editor came and told me what he wanted. It was already set. He came up with the idea of putting the character into a diaper, but now I am remembered as the king of diaper manga. I couldn't think on my own back then, because I was drawing so much to fill all the requests from magazines.

PG: You weren't at all interested in what you were drawing?

UA: Actually, I didn't like the nudity that much. At the start of my career, I didn't have any intention of drawing naked girls. I tried to draw *shōjo* manga and failed. I was a fan of Azuma Hideo and thought that I could eroticize cute girl characters the way he did [...] Like Azuma, I ended up in the genre that people call *lolicon*, but I didn't even know the term at the time. I was just doing what the editors told me to do. I think my situation is similar to Dan Oniroku, who became famous for writing S/M novels that were turned into Nikkatsu porn films. Dan had no interest in S/M – he just did his job. I understand that people generally think that manga artists draw whatever they like, but that's just not the case. When you're a professional, you need to draw what sells.

PG: *Lolicon* was a trend that was bigger than you.

UA: Of course it was bigger than me. You know *Lemon People*, right? It was a niche manga magazine that focused on *lolicon*, but it was very popular at the time. I published there, and so did big name erotic manga artists such as Dirty Matsumoto and Makimura Miki. The early 1980s is remembered as the *lolicon* boom, and I was just part of it. Let me give you an example. I was paid 10,000 yen [about US\$100] to lend my name to an erotic animation that was all about Lolita characters. My name appears in the credits of this work, but I had nothing to do with its production and have never even seen it. My name was used to sell the work. That's all. It was the *lolicon* boom, and I was filling a huge demand, even when I wasn't there. I'll say again that I had no interest in *lolicon* personally. But now I am remembered as the king of *lolicon*. You see what I'm saying? I have become a symbol of something that was way bigger than me.

PG: Did you receive complaints about *Andoro Trio*?

UA: Yeah, sure. The work was labeled *lolicon*, even though it was in a mainstream *shōnen* (for boys) magazine. Some people treated the work as if it would immediately pervert anyone who read it. I tried to keep it light and humorous, because if I had been at all serious about girls in diapers the bashing would have been more severe. There were complaints, but I never personally read them. My editors handled them. To tell you the truth, they seemed to like getting complaints. It was as if this response indicated the popularity of the work, or at least the editors seemed to think that

way. People were looking at my work, and also at the magazine, which made them happy.

PG: Why did you stop submitting to magazines?

UA: There were personal reasons. My father died, and we had to close down the family business. Then my mother got sick, and I had to take care of her. She never really got better, so I continued to live with her. I do accept commissions, but I have to draw at home, which is not the best work environment. Then there were the professional reasons that I stopped submitting my work. The *lolicon* boom ended and demand declined. Niche magazines were discontinued and specialty stores closed down. I think that those of us involved with erotic manga in the 1970s and 1980s were sort of ghettoized due to the work that we did, even though that was a different time. Some found a way out in the computer game industry, but I had no transferrable skills. I can't get used to digital production, which is the norm now. Self-publishing work is the only option left for me.

PG: I understand that you still actively sell at zine markets.

UA: Yes, I do. I use the format of zines to experiment with different styles and techniques. I also try to draw things that are topical and popular, so I incorporate characters from Miyazaki Hayao's animated films or Spider-Man. I sometimes use different names, too. For example, I publish as Sayaka, who is the daughter of Uchiyama Aki. I have a website now, and the artist image for Uchiyama Aki is a girl character that I drew.

PG: Did you ever want to draw male characters?

UA: No. I have absolutely no interest in drawing male characters. Only girls. The only time I ever really drew male characters was *Andoro Trio*, but that wasn't my choice.

PG: How do you think that people remember you today?

UA: They don't remember me. People would rather forget the *lolicon* boom. These days, older manga is often repackaged and resold, but my work receives no such treatment. My work went out of circulation before the establishment of the market for second-hand manga, so most of it will just disappear and be forgotten. I publish my own zines, but each only sells about 300 copies. The same customers come find me year after year. They buy my self-published books without even looking inside them. It's their way of supporting me, and my way of showing them that I am still alive. We're all getting older now, so it's a reunion.

PG: Do you feel uneasy being remembered as the king of *lolicon*?

UA: Well, I never called myself such a thing. People started calling me that and I was like, "Oh, whatever!" You can't do much about what people say. I just go with the flow. I sometimes write on my zines that I am a *lolicon* pioneer, but it's just a marketing gimmick and a way to be remembered.